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U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20452  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300



POSTAGE AND FEES PAID  
U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCY

# PREPARE WITH CARE

An illustration of three stacks of government mail envelopes. One stack is in the foreground, slightly to the left, and another is behind it to the right. A third stack is partially visible behind the first one. The envelopes are shown in a perspective view, highlighting their thickness and the perforated edges.

HOW TO PREPARE  
GOVERNMENT MAIL

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

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POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

## FOREWORD

You, more than most people, are probably aware of the staggering growth in the volume of mail handled by your agency. To help get your agency's letters delivered without delay and at the lowest possible cost, the Post Office Department has turned to mechanization. However, machines generally are not as versatile as human minds and hands, and they can help only if we make up for their limitations by what we feed them.

Fortunately, the automated machines used today in dispatching mail require only a little extra care in mail preparation and they will reward the users by rushing their mail along while saving the Government money.

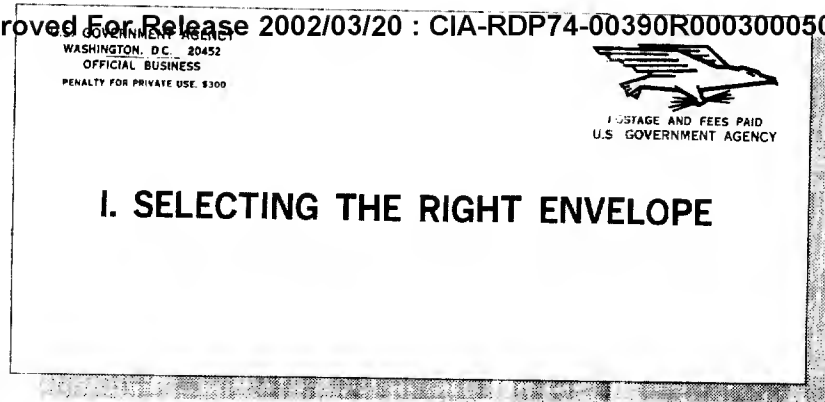
If you address mail, insert letters or other items into envelopes, or prepare any type of "self-mailer" for delivery by the Post Office, the rules in this booklet should be followed. If you design, print, or purchase envelopes, window envelope inserts, or other mail pieces, you should refer to the "Guidelines for Preparing U.S. Government Mail" and "Federal Supply Schedule FSC Group 75, Part V, Envelopes, Printed and Plain." Both items are obtainable from your agency headquarters.

This booklet, complete with visuals and easy-to-follow rules, explains the most widely applicable requirements of the guidelines. To simplify the rules as much as possible, the wording of the guidelines has been converted to more familiar terms. For example, typewriter key strokes are sometimes used in this booklet in place of the more precise linear measurements given in the guidelines.

The President of the United States has asked all of us to cooperate in this effort. Faster and more efficient service will be appreciated by those we serve—the American people. So, let's **prepare our mail with care.**

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**1. Use a letter-size envelope whenever possible.**

- **Minimum** mailable envelope is 3 x 5 inches.
- **Maximum** letter-size envelope is 5  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches.
- Larger envelopes are more costly to purchase and process. Hence, fold items to fit letter-size envelopes whenever practicable.

**2. Use an envelope that is only slightly larger than the material being mailed.**

- For an 8 x 10  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (standard Government letter size) item that can be folded, use a 3  $\frac{7}{8}$  x 8  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch envelope.
- For enclosing a self-addressed envelope, use a 4  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 9  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch envelope. The self-addressed envelope should be 3  $\frac{7}{8}$  x 8  $\frac{7}{8}$  inches and should not be folded.
- For a thin 8 x 10  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch item that **cannot** be folded without being damaged, use an 8  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch envelope.
- For a booklet or other thick item that **cannot** be folded, use an envelope which is not more than 1 inch longer or wider than the item when inserted.
- For consolidated mailings (several mail items sent to the same address in the same envelope), let the largest item determine the size of the envelope.

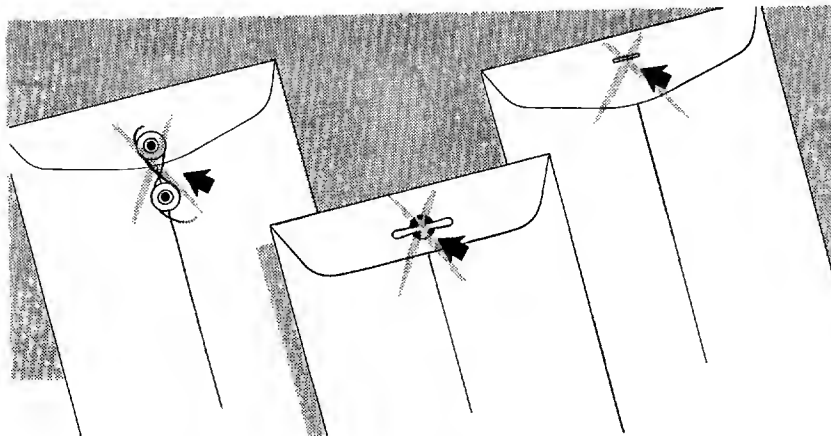
**3. Avoid using an envelope larger than 9 x 12 inches whenever possible.**

**4. Do not use a square envelope.**  
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**5. Select an envelope color that will provide a clear contrast with the address.**

- When the address is to be entered directly on a **letter-size** envelope, use an envelope that is white, light blue, or light green.
- When the address is to be entered directly on a **larger-than-letter-size** envelope, use an envelope of any color that will permit a clear contrast, other than a brilliant color offensive to the eye.
- When the address is to be entered on a **label** or on **any item that will appear in the window of an envelope**, use an envelope of any color other than a brilliant color offensive to the eye. However, when a letter-size envelope is used, the paper on which the address is placed must be white, light blue, or light green. When a larger-than-letter-size envelope or a self-mailer is used, the address may be typed on paper of any color that permits a clear contrast, other than a brilliant color offensive to the eye.

**6. Do not use a letter-size mail piece with clasps, staples, strings and buttons, or similar securing devices, nor an "open window" envelope (a window without a transparent covering).**



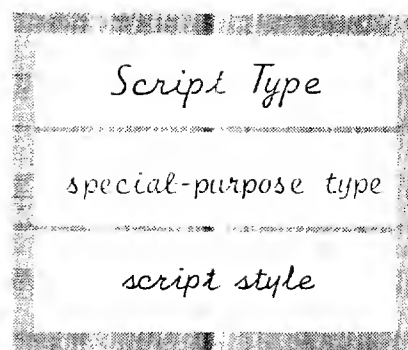
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## H. ADDRESSING LETTER-SIZE MAIL

1. Use only a black or blue-black ribbon or ink in addressing mail.
2. Use standard type styles. Avoid italics or artistic type styles, such as script. Addressing machines having nonstandard type styles must conform with the requirements for size and spacing of address characters shown in Appendix A.



USE STANDARD TYPE STYLES



AVOID ARTISTIC TYPE STYLES

3. Use a rubber stamp only if the stamped impression conforms to all provisions pertaining to address format, type, spacing, color, and alignment requirements. Be careful that no smudges appear, such as the marks made by the edges of the stamp.

GOOD

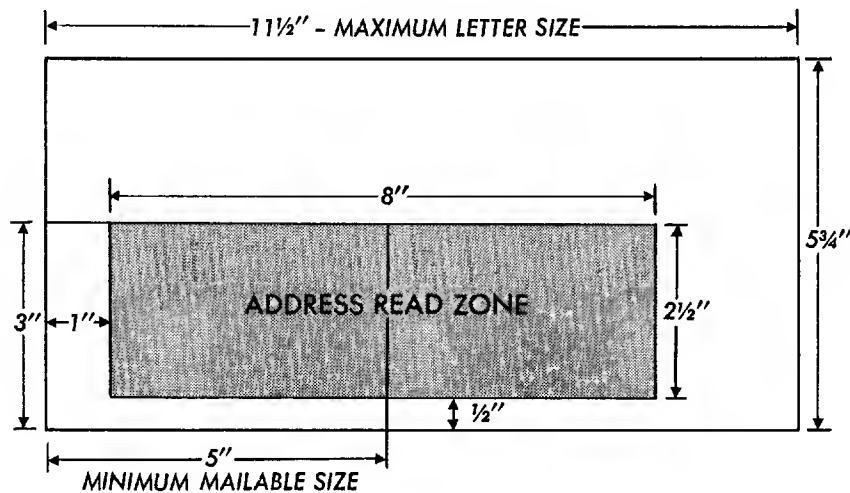
FEDERAL SUPPLY SERVICE  
GSA CENTER  
AUBURN, WASH. 98002

AVOID

FEDERAL SUPPLY SERVICE  
GSA CENTER  
AUBURN WASH. 98002

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4. Position the address within the address "read zone." This zone is an area  $2\frac{1}{2}$  x 8 inches located 1 inch from the left edge and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the bottom edge of the envelope. If the envelope is less than 9 inches long, the address read zone extends to the right edge of the envelope.



5. Position the address below, not beside, any printed marks intended to guide the typist in placing the address.

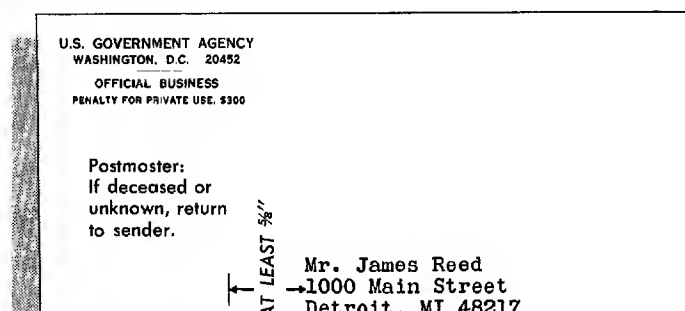
**RIGHT**

•  
Mr. James Reed  
1000 Main Street  
Detroit, MI 48217

**WRONG**

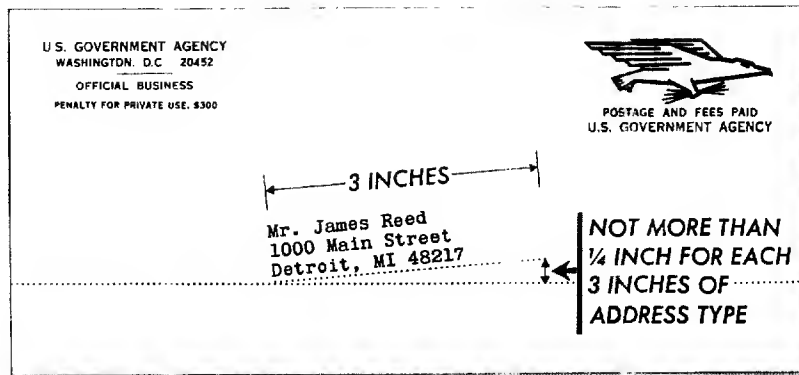
• Mr. James Reed  
1000 Main Street  
Detroit, MI 48217

6. Position the address at least  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch from any markings to the left of the address.

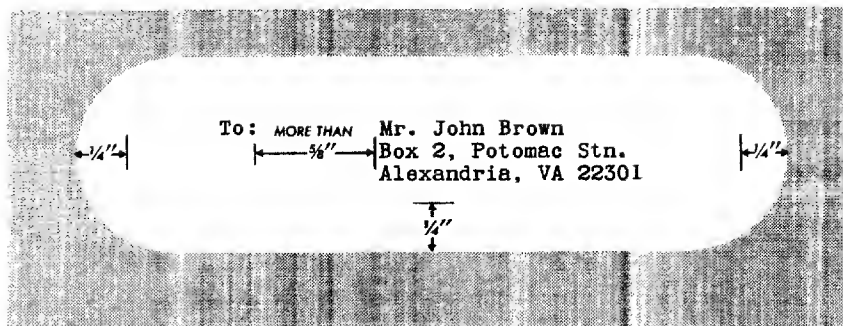


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7. Position the address parallel to the long edge of the envelope. It may not be more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch off parallel for each 3 inches of address type.



8. Provide for at least a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch clearance between the address and the left, right, and bottom edges of the window when window envelopes are used. This distance is necessary regardless of any shifting of the insert containing the address. Address guidance lines or captions, such as "TO—FROM—SUBJECT," must not appear within the window unless they are above the address or more than  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch to the left of the address.



9. Follow a uniform left margin—"block style."



10. Enter city, State, and ZIP Code on the bottom line of the address and in that sequence.

Mr. John Smith  
600 Vale Street  
Worcester, MA 01604



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11. Enter the next to the bottom line of the address in the space indicated below:

Mr. James Reed  
1000 Main Street  
Detroit, MI 48217

If applicable, either a street address or a box number is used—never both.

Mr. John Brown  
Box 2, Potomac Stn.  
Alexandria, VA 22301

If both a box number and a post office station name or number are used, the box number must appear first.

Miss Jane Smith  
R.R. 2, Box 12  
Pleasantville, NY 10570

If the letter is for rural delivery, the route number must precede the box number.

Mrs. Sue Brown  
600 Vernon St., Apt. 2  
Camp Springs, MD 20022

If an apartment, room, suite, or other unit number is used it should appear after the street address and on the same line. If it is impracticable to enter such an item on the same line, it may appear in the line above the address but never to the left or below.

Mr. William Jones  
Valley, TX 75204

If the letter is going to a small town or village without a street address, rural route, or box number, a two-line address is permissible.

12. Enter accounting numbers, subscription codes, etc., above the address, if practicable. Otherwise, they may be entered in a single line to the right of any address line, skipping at least 7 typewriter spaces (6/10 inch). Attention lines may be entered on any line of the address above the street or box number.

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→ The John Smith Company  
Att: Mr. George Brown  
240 National Drive  
Duluth, MN 55808

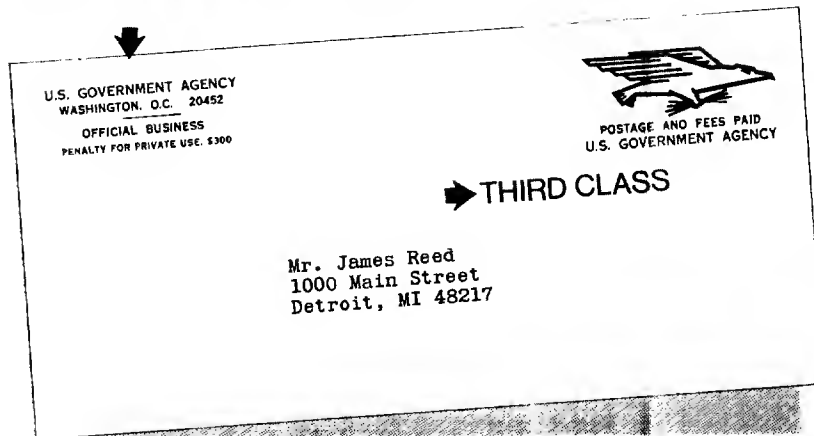
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AT LEAST 7 TYPEWRITER SPACES

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13. Enter in the upper left corner of the envelope the words "Official Business"; also "Penalty for Private Use, \$300" must be included if the agency uses the "Postage and Fees Paid" system. No other information should be in that area.



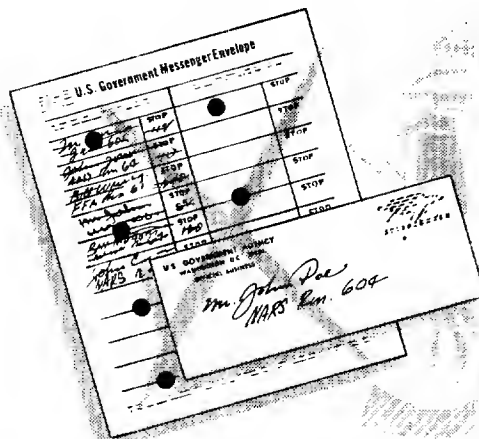
14. Enter designations for special services or class of mail below the indicia and above the address.

15. Use a special address format for military mail as described in detail in Appendix B.

16. Do not allow more than six typewriter spaces between items in any line of the address, including the space between the State and ZIP Code.

17. Use hand-addressed mail only when the use of a typewriter is impracticable.

18. Do not put a U.S. Government Messenger Envelope, or any other mail without a full postal address, into a post office mail box.

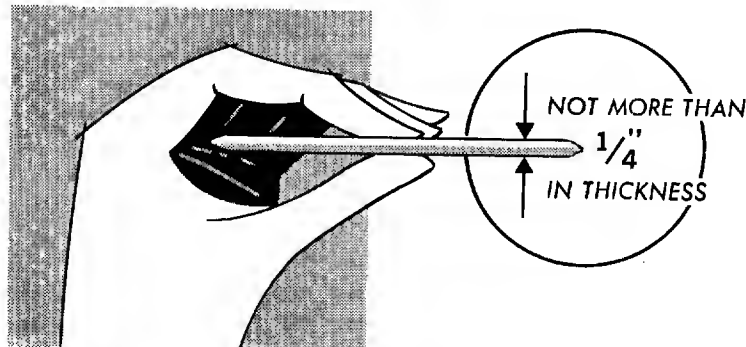


19. Program computerized systems, when practicable, so that addresses are produced in ZIP Code sequence. The mail should then be tied in bundles by ZIP Code.

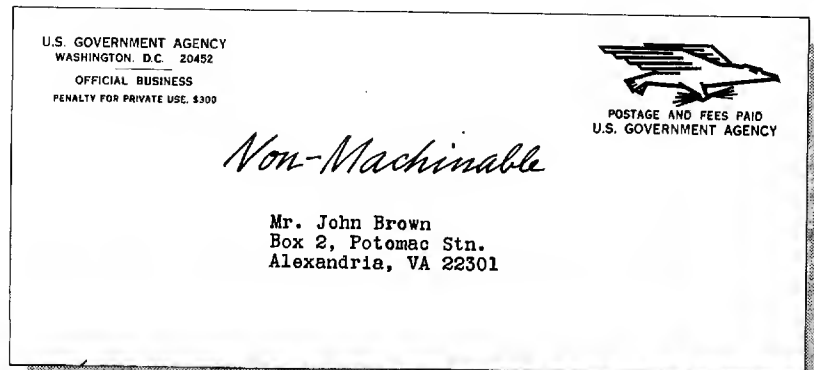
20. Refer to Appendix C, International Mailing Requirements, for information on Federal Government postage and fees paid mail which is to be sent to other countries.

### III. PREPARING THE ENVELOPE FOR MAILING

1. Limit or compress a letter-size envelope so that it does not exceed  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in thickness, when practicable. This means about four sheets of bond paper or eight tissue-weight sheets, or equivalent combinations.



2. Write "NON-MACHINABLE" above the address on any letter-size envelope that is thicker than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch after it has been stuffed and sealed.



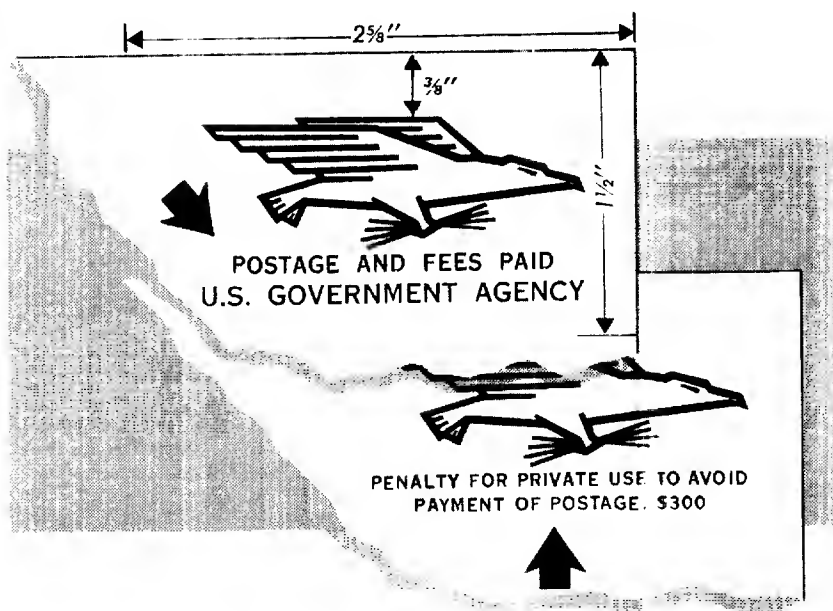
3. Press all envelopes flat before sealing to remove as much air as possible.

4. Seal each mail piece securely.

#### IV. INDICIA AND OTHER ENTRIES

1. An area  $1\frac{1}{2}$  x  $2\frac{5}{8}$  inches is reserved in the upper right hand corner of the mail piece for the indicia or postage stamp. No other markings may appear in the indicia area except borders extending no farther than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the envelope edges.

Agencies Authorized to Use the "Postage and Fees Paid" System. The indicia for letter-size mail shall consist of: The eagle symbol (actual size and location on the mail piece shown below); "Postage and Fees Paid," and agency name.



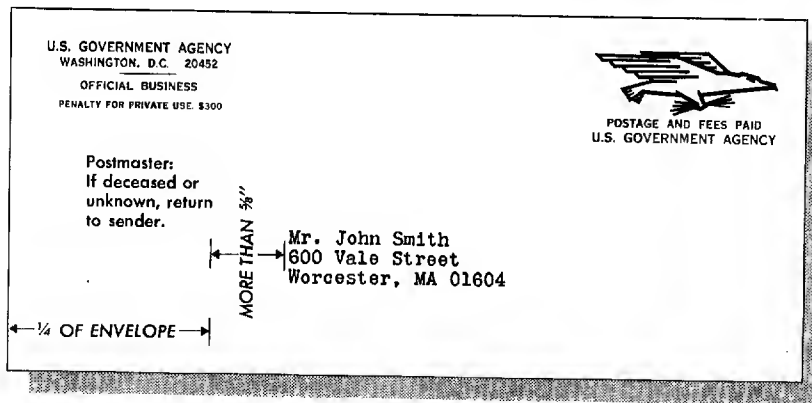
Agencies Not Using the "Postage and Fees Paid" System. The indicia for letter-size mail shall consist of: The eagle, and "Penalty for Private Use to Avoid Payment of Postage, \$300." (See illustration above).

Exceptions. The eagle may be reduced in size to not less than  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch x  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inches and the indicia area to not less than  $1\frac{1}{4}$  x 2 inches. Use of the eagle symbol is optional on larger than letter-size mail. The eagle may be omitted on self-mailers completely printed by computer with no provisions for printing artwork, provided the items are faced, sorted and tied in bundles by ZIP Code.

Special Tagging. Phosphorescent tagging will be added to Government letter-size mail within 1 year, with the exception of items faced, sorted and tied in bundles by ZIP Code.

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2. A message, emblem, slogan, or special design may be printed above the address if it does not extend into the indicia area, or on the left one-fourth of the mail piece if it is more than  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch to the left of the address. (See illustration below). These items, however, must be approved in accordance with 41 CFR 101-11.603-9 Envelopes; borders, markings, etc.



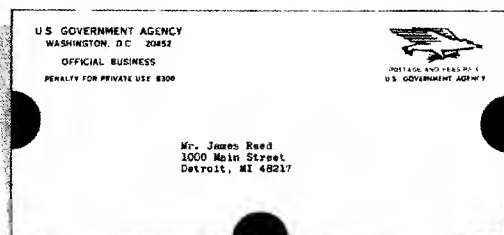
## V. PREPARING SELF-MAILERS

A "self-mailer" is a mail piece that has no outer cover, wrapping, or envelope for the material being mailed. A self-mailer can be a folded or unfolded post card, a single sheet, or a number of sheets.

1. A self-mailer that is not presorted, faced and tied in bundles by ZIP Code, must meet all requirements for envelopes or single cards, including size, weight, shape, construction, addressing, color, and complete sealing.
2. Self-mailers not meeting envelope or single card requirements may be mailed preferably as third-class mail, or as first-class mail if necessary for more rapid handling. In either case, they must be presorted, faced and tied by ZIP Code. In addition:

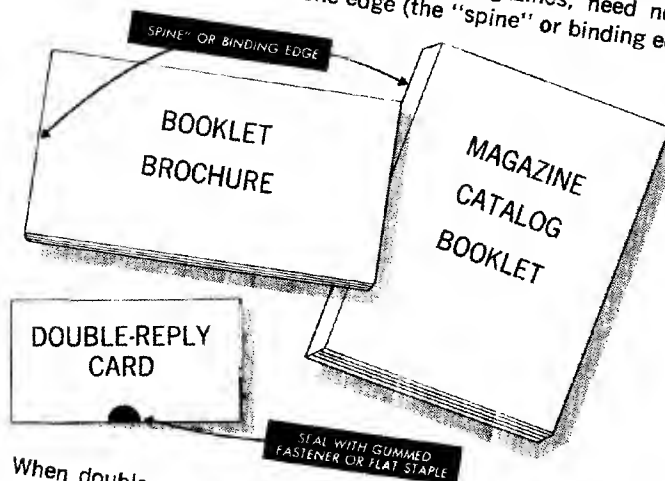
- They must be folded to letter size, if possible, and fastened by at least one fastener on the long, open edge. However, preferably they should be fastened on all three open edges. A gummed fastener is preferred, but staples may be used if the staples lie flat and do not stick up to scratch or catch. Staples inserted by binding equipment usually meet this requirement; those applied by hand-operated staplers frequently do not. Some special-type hand staplers are available

that are specifically designed to provide completely flat staples.



SEAL WITH GUMMED FASTENER OR FLAT STAPLE

- Items that **cannot** be folded to letter size without damage, such as multi-page booklets and magazines, need not be sealed on more than one edge (the "spine" or binding edge).



- When double reply cards are used, fasten the cards with at least one gummed fastener or flat staple as described previously. The reply portion when detached must also conform with the requirements for letter-size mail.
- 3. Punched cards or other letter-size cards that are used as self-mailers, and exceed 4¼ inches in height and/or 6 inches in length, must be between .009 and .013 of an inch thick.**
- The most common punched card is approximately .007 of an inch thick and should not be used as a self-mailer. However, .009-inch-thick cards are available and may be used as self-mailers.
  - Punched cards .007 of an inch thick that are used in obtaining information from the public must be returned enclosed in an envelope.

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## APPENDIX A

### Size and Spacing of Address Characters

#### Typographic Tolerances

(All Figures Inclusive)

**CHARACTER PITCH:** 7–14 characters per inch.  
**CHARACTER HEIGHT:** .08—.20 inch.  
**SPACE BETWEEN WORDS:** 1 character space to .6 inch.  
**LINE SPACING:** 3 to 6 lines per inch.

## APPENDIX B

### Address Format for Military Mail, as of 9–15–69

(Reprinted from Chapter 1 of Postal Manual)

#### 123.8 MILITARY MAIL

##### .81 OVERSEAS MILITARY MAIL

**.811 Army and Air Force.** Show grade, full name, including first name and middle name or initial, service number (same as social security account number), organization, APO number and the post office through which the mail is to be routed. Examples:

Pvt. Willard J. Doe, 300–52–6111  
Company F  
167th Infantry Regt.  
APO New York 09801

A1C Howard J. Doe, 248–60–5033  
50 Fld Maint Sq.  
CMR Box 861  
APO New York 09109

A/1c Harold F. Doe, 249–06–5432  
2d Bomb Squadron  
APO New York 09125

**.812 Navy and Marine Corps.** Show full name, including first name and middle name or initial, rank or rating, service number, shore based organizational unit with Navy number, or mobile unit designation, or name of ship, and the fleet post office through which the mail is to be routed. Examples:

John M. Doe QMSN 686 54 70 USN  
USS Lyman K. Swenson (DD 729)  
FPO San Francisco 96601

James T. Doe, AQF–2, 329 76 93 USN  
U.S. Naval Air Facility  
FPO New York 09521

Maj. John M. Doe, 023492 USMCR  
Staff, Fleet Marine Force Pacific  
FPO San Francisco 96602

Lt. Leroy A. Doe, 063941, USMC  
U.S. Marine Corps Air Facility  
FPO San Francisco 96672

**.813 Dependents Residing With Military Personnel.** Mail addressed to dependents residing in overseas areas will be addressed in care of the sponsor. Example:

Miss Mary J. Doe  
c/o Sgt. Howard A. Doe, 345–67–8900  
Company A, 1st Bn. 16th Inf.  
APO New York 09036

**.814 Abbreviated addresses.** Those mailers addressing mail by data processing equipment may shorten the address further by abbreviating the name of the gateway post office, as for example:

APO NY 09403  
APO SF 96503  
APO SEA 98749

**.82 MILITARY MAIL WITHIN UNITED STATES**  
**.821 Army and Air Force.** Show grade, full name, including first name and middle name or initial, service number (same as social security account number), organization, military installation and the ZIP Code. Examples:

Pvt. Willard J. Doe, 300-52-6111  
Co B, 1st Bn, 12th Infantry  
Fort Lewis, Washington 98433

A/1c Harold F. Doe, 249-06-5432  
1 Strat Aerosp Div  
Vandenberg AFB, California 93437

**.822 Navy and Marine Corps.** Show full name, including first name and middle name or initial, rank or rating, service number, organization, military installation and the ZIP Code. Examples:

Bill E. Smith, SK3, 331 20 54 USN  
U.S. Naval Supply Depot  
Great Lakes, Illinois 60088

M/Sgt Peter V. Perez, 1342165 USMC  
Headquarters Battalion  
Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps  
Henderson Hall  
Arlington, Virginia 22214

**.823 Dependents Residing with Military Personnel.**

a. Mail addressed to dependents for delivery through the sponsor's military unit should be addressed in care of the sponsor. Example:

Master Robert Brown  
c/o Sgt. Michael Brown, 081-32-6959  
Company A, 6th Bn., 10th Inf.  
Fort Gordon, Georgia 30905

b. Mail addressed to dependents for delivery at the sponsor's military quarters need not be addressed in care of the sponsor. Example:

Master Robert Brown  
2519 C Street  
Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio 45433

**.83 GEOGRAPHICAL ADDRESS**

Mail showing a foreign city and country in addition to the military address is subject to the rates of postage and conditions for international mail. (See chapter 2.)

## APPENDIX C

### International Mailing Requirements, as of 8-20-68

(Reprinted from Chapter 2 of Postal Manual,)

#### 221.2 POSTAGE

#### .24 MAILINGS WITHOUT POSTAGE

**.242 Federal Government Official Mail.** Official mail of the Federal Government is accepted for other countries without postage affixed under the following conditions:

a. **Postage and Fees Paid Mail.** All official mail of authorized departments and agencies prepared in accordance with the provisions of 137.231 a, b, and c will be given the postal service indicated on its cover. There is no limitation as to the countries to which this mail may be addressed provided the service desired is available. The mail is subject to the weight and size limits prescribed in parts 222 and 231, and, when required, must be accompanied by the postal forms mentioned in those parts.